

Kansas Public Health Association, Inc.

**SAMUEL J. CRUMBINE
BANQUET**

HONORING

Evan Wright

Thursday, May 14, 1970

Radisson Hotel

Wichita, Kansas

THE SAMUEL J. CRUMBINE MEDAL

Presented for outstanding service in public health



PREVIOUS AWARDEES

- 1946-Samuel J. Crumbine, M.D.
- 1947-Clarence H. Kinnaman, M.D.
- 1948-Charles H. Lerrigo, M.D.
- 1951-Earnest Boyce, CE.
- 1952-E. V. McCollum, Ph. D.
- 1954-Earle G. Brown, M. D.
- 1955-Karl A. Menninger, M. D., and
William C. Menninger, M. D.
- 1956-Ralph I. Canuteson, M. D.
- 1958-Vernon M. Winkle, M. D.
- 1961-Franklin D. Murphy, M. D.
- 1962-Leona Baumgartner, M. D.
- 1963-Charles A. Hunter, Ph. D.
- 1964-Fred Lowe Soper, M. D.
- 1965-Dwight F. Metzler, C. E., M.P.H.
- 1966-Geoffrey M. Martin, M.D., M.P.H.
- 1967-W. Fred Mayes, M.M., M.P.H.
- 1968-M. Leon Bauman, M.D., M.P.H.
- 1969-Thomas Robin Hood, M.D., M.P.H.



EVAN WRIGHT

The Kansas Public Health Association has chosen Evan Wright for its highest honor: The Samuel J. Crumbine Medal. This selection is fitting. Both men's service to the people of Kansas has been characterized by the strongest possible dedication and effort.

Dr. Crumbine was hailed as a "Pioneer in Common Sense" by Modern Sanitation in 1954. The same title might apply to Evan. Nevertheless both men have led a colorful career. Each a crusader against quackery and contamination, they have been responsible for state legislation ahead of their time and of federal enactment. With a flair for the dramatic, they have frequently brought legislators around to their way of thinking—always for the good of the public. Neither Dr. Crumbine nor Evan Wright, although appearing to be quiet and unassuming, would abandon their principles under pressure.

Evan was always an admirer of the revered pioneer state health officer. However, Evan admits that he was disappointed when he first met Dr. Crumbine at a Food and Drug meeting in New York. Instead of the imposing, black-bearded man he had seen in a Statehouse photograph, Evan saw before him a meek looking, little old man. It didn't take many minutes of

conversation to reassure Evan that this was the same dynamic crusader he had read about.

Evan Wright was born in Garnett, Kansas, on June 5, 1912. He was given a name almost prophetic of his future career. Evan means **challenger**, suitable for a man who has challenged the fraudulent and unscrupulous through the years. And the name Wright means **worker**. Certainly along with the dedication and the challenge of public health, goes plain old elbow-grease **work**.

Evan, with his parents, sister and three brothers, lived "all over Kansas and Missouri" during his elementary school years. Since then, Topeka has been home. He graduated from Topeka High School and attended Washburn University, the University of Kansas, and M.I.T.

His Career

Called "Mr. Food and Drug of Kansas" by a former co-worker, Evan's work in the State Health Department spans 35 years. He began as a food and drug inspector on May 1, 1935. Five years later he was appointed director of the division.

Long before "consumer protection" became a household phrase Evan was protecting people of his state against quackery, unsanitary or contaminated foods and drugs, and against

monetary fraud.

Largely through his 12-year efforts the State Legislature passed the Kansas Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act in 1953. Evan arranged to have its revision sponsored by women who had been elected to the House of Representatives. (It happened that they represented both parties.) He sold them and briefed them on its many complex provisions so thoroughly that they made a convincing presentation to their fellow legislators. The male legislators were pleased to vote affirmatively on a bill so charmingly presented! And naturally Evan was pleased about the whole thing.

Even more astounding, and ahead of its time, was passage of the Hazardous Household Articles Act. Again Evan showed his talent for the dramatic. He knew that one kind of plastic toy contained a liquid similar to kerosene. His job was to show the legislators the hazard, in the event a child swallowed or inhaled the toy's contents. Evan got a lady representative into the act. As she touched a match to the wick he had inserted in the toy, some Health Department staff watched from the gallery with bated breath. Would it light? In seconds it flared up and burned steadily, to the horror of the spectators. The represen-

tatives were convinced that the toy was indeed a hazard and the act passed. Two years elapsed before a comparable federal act was passed.

When asked for other tales about his colorful career, Evan grinned and said he was saving his stories for his speech at the Crumbine Banquet. Like the newspaperman he could have been, he didn't want to get "scooped."

The "challenger" has gone after faith healers and unscrupulous hucksters. Evan demonstrates quack products before groups all over the state. He is always in demand for his speeches on quackery and drug abuse. His desk is piled high with stuff—products seized for mislabeling, fraud, or promising what they cannot produce. He is especially ruthless with charlatans who tantalize patients with fake cures, taking their money and sometimes endangering their health or their lives. A recent cancer cure investigated by his division proved to be nothing but a blend of several wines. Harmless enough in itself, perhaps, but dangerous when it replaced or postponed medical treatment for a cancer patient.

The assortment on his desk includes not only a mountain of paperwork, but such things as a mislabeled cereal that promises a full day's required vitamins in a single bowl; an

elixir for "tired blood" that costs about 10 times as much as a doctor's prescription; a home fire extinguisher filled with lethal carbon tetrachloride; a bottle of highly inflammable nail polish and lots more questionable products.

Evan has earned the respect of attorneys and judges. He knows the laws under which he operates. This legal knowledge, and a reputation for objective fairness, has brought him the job of "hearing officer" for the Board of Health more times than he can count.

Evan served as chairman of the State Board of Health's poison control committee for many years. Through its efforts, poison control centers were established in Kansas. There are now 13 centers, each serving its area and reporting on poisoning cases.

With increased public interest in the drug abuse problem, Evan finds his speaking calendar filling more rapidly all the time. He has conducted seminars on drug abuse for law enforcement officers and worked with various groups on the subject.

Other activities under his direction include seizing contaminated or adulterated foods, investigation of food-borne disease outbreaks, promotion of the Standard Milk Ordinance, to name a few.

Evan is so intensely concerned about his work that a defeat can be a crushing blow to him personally. Transferring the meat inspection out of the State Department of Health after nearly 30 years caused him anxiety and sleepless nights. He admits now that his division candonically without the burdensome task, that only his pride was hurt. What the world needs is more of that kind of pride—pride in personal integrity and in a job well done.

The opinion of his peers is a good indication of a man's character. Evan Wright is respected and liked by his co-workers. He constantly tries to promote more comradeship among department staff.

An example is his "80 by 80" campaign several years ago. He initiated the promotion on the premise that public health personnel should work toward a happy, health life span of 80 years by 1980 for everyone in Kansas. Dropped because of no budget and inadequate staff, one purpose of his brainchild was to get the staff working together on a common project.

Another employee relations program of Evan's is the departmental luncheons held every Monday noon in the State Office Building cafeteria. He spends many hours securing speakers and printing the promotional flyers at

night on his own basement equipment. He firmly believes anything that draws 30 to 50 employees together has merit.

Evan communicates with everyone. People like him—except the money-grubbing shysters who wander into Kansas with their quack products. They hate his guts.

Professional Organizations

Evan has been an officer of the Kansas Public Health Association and was presented with a Service Recognition Award in 1962.

It is not just Kansans who recognize his worth. A playback of Evan's record would be incomplete without mention of his influence nationally among his counterparts in the Federal Food and Drug Administration and in other states.

He has provided leadership in the Mid-Continental Association of Food and Drug Officials. It is an organization through which states in this area work closely together to protect the public from fraud and harmful products. At its 1969 annual conference and training session, the association unanimously passed a resolution expressing appreciation of Evan's contribution toward making the meeting a success.

In 1962, Evan was presented with the

Harvey J. Wiley Award for outstanding service in his field. Now secretary-treasurer of the Association of Food and Drug Officials of the U.S., Evan is a past-president—an office also held by Dr. Crumbine in 1915.

Evan has been a member of the Congress on Medical Quackery, Food Standards Committee, and National Labeling Committee. He is frequently called to Washington, D.C., as a consultant.

A member of the Episcopal Church, Evan has also been active in civic groups. He was a troop committeeman for several years for Topeka Boy Scout Troop 20 and went on many overnights with the boys. One year he spent a week of vacation time with the troop at summer camp.

His Avocations

Evan Wright probably could have had a career in several fields besides public health, had he chosen to do so. Most of the pictures in the Wright home are "Evan originals." Although he has worked in oils, he prefers water colors. Landscapes are his favorite subjects and he often takes slides of Kansas scenes as models for his paintings.

Journalism might easily have been his field; it runs in the family. A brother is a

newspaperman and his sister is a printer.

No mean writer himself, Evan has appeared in print many times. His small story for small fry—named "The Cuckoo Who Couldn't Count"—has just been selected for a second grade reader in Oklahoma. It had been translated into Swedish previously. Another story, "Windjammer of the Plains," was published in Boys Life and has been reprinted in various anthologies, including a Braille magazine for blind youth. He has a scrapbook of published material but just try to see it. He is a modest man.

Evan loves to travel. He's a nut about history, stopping by spots of historical interest in Kansas. In fact, he likes to seek out the little traveled by-roads of the state. He has been in almost all continental states and Canada. He and Mrs. Wright spent several weeks in Italy last fall. Camera in hand, they saw the original art masterpieces he had always admired. Many slides and a complete travelogue are the result.

He's very well read and has a large personal library. A member of two book clubs, Evan prefers American history and art subjects. A mathematician, it's been said that four of his kids wouldn't have made it past high school algebra without his tutoring. Seems they didn't

inherit the talent.

Evan has a home workshop and a large collection of tools. He is a genuine "do-it-yourselfer" around the house. His son, Tom, still uses one of several large wooden desks his dad built over 15 years ago. Evan is an inventor, too. He built his own electric lawn mower and arc welder, published illustrated how-to-stories. He has always been interested in astronomy and has a telescope, a Christmas gift. Scientific American is his favorite magazine.

A better-than-average cook, anyway, he's now a regular because of his wife's working hours. He doesn't care for bland food. Gourmet magazine is on his subscription list and he is perfecting his ability with Italian food.

His Family

Evan and his wife, Betty, were married 36 years ago. They have five children, one son and four daughters. Tom is a senior political science student at Washburn University in Topeka. His wife is Mary Wright, Area V Public Health Nurse. Judith is a senior English major at the University of Colorado. She is married to an Army captain stationed at Ft. Carson, Colorado, Ron Riffel. They live in Colorado Springs.

Elizabeth has only a few hours left as a

journalism major at KU. She is married to a senior law student, Michael Redfield, and is working to help put hubby through school. They live at Iowa City.

Sara is a stewardess for National Airlines based in Miami, Florida, and Rosemary is still at home. She attends Topeka West high school and is on the staff of the school paper.

In Tribute

Dr. Thomas R. Hood, a former State Health Officer and now Deputy Executive Director of the American Public Health Association, sums up Evan's contribution. "If there ever was a public servant to whom the public owed a very great and unacknowledged debt, that person is Evan Wright."

The citation of the Wiley Award is an indication of Evan's contribution in public health. It reads: "In recognition of outstanding service and devotion to duty in administering the Food and Drug Laws of his state...and the leadership, guidance and inspiration he has provided to his fellow workers throughout the nation."